

Remarks at the Democratic Governors' Association Dinner February 1, 1993

Thank you very much, Governor Walters. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for that wonderful welcome.

I am full of gratitude tonight as I remember that just a year ago when I was at this banquet, I came in from the cold of New Hampshire, cold in more ways than one—[laughter]—and received from the leadership of this organization a white scarf, which I wore for the remainder of the campaign in New Hampshire to stay warm, a cap which I still have, and a renewed sense that the battle in which I was engaged was worth the effort.

I want to thank every one of you who had anything to do with that. I noticed in the audience tonight the Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, who did such a brilliant job as the head of our party and keeping us going; representatives of many groups, teachers, working people, and others out here in this audience, that have worked so hard to give us a chance to put our children first in this country again; and many others who raised money, knocked on doors, and walked along roads.

I want to pay a particular tribute tonight to my good friend the Governor of Hawaii, not only for his leadership as the chair of the Democratic Governors' Association but for being my friend and supporter and for giving us a model of what an aggressive, active Democratic leader ought to be. Under John's leadership, the Democratic Governors' Association had one of its busiest and most successful years. There are now two more Democratic Governors. The DGA worked closely with our campaign, and largely as a result of that teamwork we won 8 of the 12 races in which we were engaged last year, the best showing by the Democratic Governors since 1982 when I, as the youngest ex-Governor in the history of America, made my comeback. [Laughter] Now we have Democratic Governors in 30 of the 50 States, our best margin since 1985.

I've also been impressed by John's extraordinary political leadership in Hawaii. When he was supporting me in the primary campaign last year, I kept angling for an invitation to Hawaii. I kept saying, "You know, I need to carry Hawaii. I haven't carried any western States. Don't

you think I ought to show up out there?" And he said, "If I can't carry Hawaii for you without your presence, I shouldn't be the Governor out here." And sure enough, we did. I think it has something to do with his native Hawaiian heritage. We were playing golf once together in Hawaii, John and I, and we played on a course on which there were no sand traps; there were only lava flows—[laughter]—so that the ball simply disappeared, never to be seen again. And we both hit long drives that sliced slightly into the lava flows. Mine disappeared; his hit a rock and bounced into the middle of the fairway. He informed me that his ancestors, who included King Kamehameha, who united the Hawaiian Islands, believed in a form of ancestor worship. And now, surely I can see the ultimate truth of his faith. Anyway, I think John and Lynne are great, and I hope that they will have many more years in public service. This country would be a lot better off if that happens.

I also want to salute the new chair of the DGA, my friend David Walters from Oklahoma. He and Rhonda were among those who were in the snows of New Hampshire with me. I told them the other day when I saw them that I just looked at a picture of us a year ago; here we are now in Washington celebrating a new inauguration. A year ago, I have a picture of us with Mike Sullivan; the former Governor of Vermont, Madeleine Kunin; and the former Governor of Michigan, Jim Blanchard, standing at the Super 8 Motel in Manchester. [Laughter] And it's a great commentary on how we get things done in this country. I think David Walters and Ann Richards will be a great team; that is, if Ann Richards is not too boastful about the Super Bowl victory last night. [Laughter]

I remember last fall when the Democratic Governors joined me in a western fly-around and a campaign we called "Winning the West." Most people thought the Democrats had no chance in the West. We traveled to seven States and won six, in no small measure because of the inordinate support that the western Democratic Governors gave the Clinton-Gore campaign.

Democratic Governors from the South participated—[applause]—clap, Governor Roberts.

That's good. You can clap for yourself. Democratic Governors in the South participated in a fly-around and campaigned for me in a region in which we invested relatively small amounts of money. They went to six States, and for the first time in 12 years we carried three of them.

As someone who answered to the term "Governor" until just 12 days ago, I'm proud to be here with the men and women who have been my friends and colleagues in the struggle to deal with the legacy of the 1980's, people who deal with the real problems of real people, who can't make excuses or print money when there's no money there, who struggle with health care and welfare and jobs and education and the ways that national economic trends and international development actually touch people's lives for good or ill.

As you and I learned from the elections last year, the American people want their political system and their Government to end gridlock, to face problems, and to make progress. They're tired of a process that's been too divided by partisanship or dominated by special interests or driven by short-term advantage of politicians instead of the long-term interests of people. They sent us to the statehouse and to the White House to change America. And they want action now. That is our mandate, and we must never forget it.

We have a chance to create a new Democratic majority in this country, rooted in the experience of governing and living. But we must never forget some basic things. First of all, we have to do this together: the Congress and the President, the States and the communities and the National Government.

I see in the audience a person who ran for President last year and turned out to be the best supporter I ever had in the Presidential campaign, Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, and I want to thank him. After a tough primary campaign, when he began to work for me, even in the primary when it was still going, I realized that he had gotten into this race for the same reason I had: He believed that we had to change this country. And the changes were more important than him or me or anybody else. Well, I still believe that. And if we remember that, we can succeed.

I think that you might be interested to know that there were some surveys conducted after the Inaugural week. After the television ratings turned out to be very high and there were huge

crowds at all the events, the people had watched the gala all over America, and they'd watched that magnificent service at the Lincoln Memorial, and they'd watched our church service, and 800,000 people showed up at the Inaugural. But you know what people in America remembered most about the Inaugural week? That on the day after the Inauguration, we opened the White House to ordinary Americans. That is what registered out in the country.

I say that because somehow we've all got to find a way to remember every day that the people who can't come to these dinners are the people we hold these dinners for. We also have to remember we got elected to try a new approach, to expand opportunity, not Government, to increase investment, and to show literally that we can reinvent Government.

I was amazed, you know, the other crowd's had the White House for 12 years, and they have presented themselves as businesslike and modern, you know, and tried to make the Democrats look like yesterday's crowd. Well, when I got to the White House, guess what I found? Same phone system Jimmy Carter had, with technology that was put in during Kennedy's time and changed only to put push-buttons instead of dials. No E-mail, no conference calls, but anybody could pick up the button I was talking on anywhere in the White House and listen in on the conversation. [Laughter] So we could have the conference call we didn't want, but we couldn't have the one we did.

People said last week, "Well, you know, when you're going to do controversial things, you need to gin up your operation again and send the talking points out and communicate with people." There's not even any E-mail in the office. It's a yesterday place, and we need to make it a tomorrow place.

I also want you to know that two of my Cabinet members have already met with every employee in their Departments, in their national headquarters, and were told, both of them, that they were the first Secretaries in 12 years to meet with all the employees in their Departments. The leadership of one of our Cabinet agencies abolished the executive dining room and saved \$125,000 or \$150,000 and brought the career employees up to the executive suite, and there were people who worked there for 25 years and had never seen where the bosses work. We are going to change the culture of

the way this Federal Government works. We are going to reinvent it, and we're going to make it work again.

We are going to try to do what our adversaries always talked about, and that is to empower people, not entitle them. Whether it's welfare or trade or industrial policy or technology policy, what the American people want is a hand up, not a handout, and we're going to give it to them, if we can get the kind of support we need across the country to support these changes.

And most importantly, we're going to try to recreate a sense of partnership and community in America again, an America in which we don't have a person to waste. I believe as strongly as I can say that if we could create in this country a feeling burning in the heart of every American, that it was simply unacceptable to let one life go that could be saved, we could solve virtually every problem we have. Because if you look at every place where the system has broken down, the manifestation of that breakdown is somebody's life that is less than it ought to be. These children being shot in the streets—we're in Somalia, debating how we can keep peace in Somalia when the mortality rate is greater in some neighborhoods in the United States of America.

The immunization initiative that you've read about that we're going to be announcing in the next few days, you know, we were actually criticized in a story in the New York Times for the idea that the National Government might use its purchasing power to buy enough vaccines to immunize all the kids in the country. And people say, well, that would be bad if we did that. It would be better if we don't and we let these kids get sick?

All the factory workers in this country that are losing their jobs because we have no real strategy to create jobs, let me just say in parentheses here: As Democrats, we ought not ever to forget that there is a big difference between economic measurements of progress and whether that progress is manifested in the real lives of people. In the 1980's, the stock market tripled, but the Fortune 500 companies reduced employment. And the difference was made up by small business. So we can have a strong economy on the surface where the stock market is booming, but if small business people can't get bank loans at the local bank, jobs won't be created for all these people that are losing their

big employee jobs. And we have to remember things like that. With all this so-called economic recovery of the last 6 months, we're not creating jobs yet. And we've got to find a way to put people back to work. That is the ultimate and first test of whether life is working in America.

Finally, let me reiterate a line that I borrowed from President Roosevelt for the Inaugural speech. We learned in the 1980's that we had to be about bold, persistent experimentation. That is what I want to try to convince Congress and the country we ought to do. It means that we will try some things that will not work. And when we do, we have to have the courage to quit. One of the weaknesses of our Government is that when we start something that doesn't work, or whether we start something that does, we keep on doing it. We have to have the courage to experiment, to try, to stop, to start again. I am convinced that if we do that, we can deal with the health care crisis; we can deal with the deficit; we can deal with all these problems, but ultimately, we can change the shape of people's lives. And if I might say—I know that it defies the momentary conventional wisdom—I think we're off to a pretty good start.

The United States Congress in the next few days—maybe both Houses after the recess—will pass the new budget for the National Institutes of Health. And now we'll be able to go back to doing research, including fetal tissue, that offers great progress in dealing with children with diabetes and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's problems and other problems. I think that is progress.

The United States Senate was good enough to confirm every one of my Cabinet members, save one, on the day after I became President, the first time in longer than a generation that that had happened. And I did get into a controversy. But you know something? If you just want me to do things that are easy, you should have elected somebody else President.

When we deal with things that are hard, there ought to be debate. There ought to be discussion. People ought to say they disagree. They ought to call the White House and jam the phone lines. And by the way, there's a 1964 switchboard in the White House. That's one reason that the phone lines are jammed. But I'm just telling you, I think this is exciting. We need to shake things up. We need to have a debate in this country again. We need to do things and talk about things, get them out and let

people argue.

I think together we can do what we were hired to do. But remember: I think we are about the business of creating a new Democratic majority if, but only if, we go to where the people are, lift them up, bring them with us, and change their lives. That requires a decent attention to the opinions of Republicans who want to help in change, too, and most importantly, a passionate determination never to forget that there is a real reason that most Americans re-

membered—2,000 of their number who won a lottery to come to the White House. They haven't felt like it was their house in a long time. You help me give it back to them, and we'll have a bright future.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:21 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Michael J. Sullivan of Wyoming and Gov. Ann Richards of Texas.

Remarks to the National Governors' Association

February 2, 1993

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Governor Romer, ladies and gentlemen. I felt pretty good sitting at that table although that's my real place over there. *[Laughter]* We had a wonderful meeting yesterday, I thought, for a long time, maybe the longest time a President has ever met with a group of Governors, but we were discussing a terribly important issue: health care. And then we also got to discuss the deficit crisis and the budget problems a little bit.

I wanted to come here today, as you prepare to leave, to once again reaffirm my commitment to working in partnership with the Governors. You deal with real people in a more immediate way than, unfortunately, the President often gets to do. When I was a Governor, every day I would hear directly from people or see people who had suffered from layoffs or had their businesses closed down or who were afraid of losing their health coverage or who desperately wanted to improve their schools.

As you and I learned from last year's elections, the only pattern was not a partisan one. It was a pattern of determination on the part of the American people to have their political system and their Government address their real concerns. They don't want our process divided by partisanship or dominated by special interest or driven by short-term advantage. They know things that have too often been forgotten here over the last dozen years. The values that are central to our country's character must be central to our Government: work, family, faith, opportunity, responsibility, and community.

What I appreciated about this meeting is that no matter what our region or our party, we've always gotten together and tried to pay serious attention to our problems. I think the Governors have exemplified for the last dozen years the bold, persistent experimentation that President Roosevelt called for at the beginning of the Great Depression when he took office. And I'm here to tell you that I'm going to do everything I can to work with you in partnership to share ideas and resources and energy to try to do what we can to move this country forward.

As we discussed health care, economic policy, and the deficit yesterday, I'd like to spend just a few moments today talking about something that many of us have been working on since the middle 1980's, the issue of welfare reform.

I've often spoken with many of you about the need to end welfare as we know it, to make it a program that supports people who have fallen on hard times or who have difficulties that can be overcome, but eventually and ultimately a program that helps people to get on their feet through health care, child care, job training, and ultimately a productive job.

No one likes the welfare system as it currently exists, least of all the people who are on it. The taxpayers, the social service employees themselves don't think much of it either. Most people on welfare are yearning for another alternative, aching for the chance to move from dependence to dignity. And we owe it to them to give them that chance.

In the middle 1980's, when I was a Governor here, I worked with Governor Castle, now a